

undoing. Or perhaps it was the ideological commitment to preserving the size of government by the most stridently liberal Members of the other side. Whatever the reasons, Madam President—whatever the reasons—it is a tragic missed opportunity for the country.

I hope the economists are wrong and that our economy will continue to grow over the next year and a half to buy us time to tackle the problems we face. But after years of discussions and months of negotiations, I have little question that as long as this President is in the Oval Office a real solution is probably unattainable. This was not an easy decision for me.

From my first day as Republican leader in the Senate, I have called on Presidents from both parties to work with Congress on real solutions to the problems we face. For more than 2 years I have had conversations with the administration about working together to accomplish something big for the country. On each occasion, I have been met initially with encouraging words that gradually give way to moving the goalposts.

In the end, they have always expressed a fundamental unwillingness to engage in a meaningful effort to reduce spending as a means to rein in the debt. Despite our stagnant economy, and the dire warnings of economic and security experts that we cannot sustain our mounting debt or unfunded liabilities, this President has proven that he will do almost anything to protect the size and the scope of Washington, DC's burgeoning bureaucracy, including to threaten the economic security of every American by backing us up to the edge of default.

I have heard some on the other side of the aisle suggest that Republicans have put us in this position by refusing to accept what they call a balanced approach.

My response is that if the American people have learned one thing over the past few years, it is that they need to bring their decoder rings to any debate in Washington these days. When Democrats say "investment," they mean government spending. When they say "revenue," they mean higher taxes. And when they say "shared sacrifice," they mean they want you to take the hit, not Washington. It starts with the so-called rich, with the owners of the corporate jets, but pretty soon it hits the family flying in coach. Eventually everyone gets fleeced.

Well, Americans have had enough. They think it is time Washington shares in the sacrifice. Republicans invited Democrats into these discussions about finding a solution to our problems, and while we approached them with clear and unwavering principles, we also brought an open mind. The record reflects that. I will not betray the confidence of those who were willing to negotiate with us, but there can be no question by anyone involved in these discussions that Republicans were willing to make tough choices.

So where do we go from here?

Well, I was one of those who had long hoped we could do something big for the country. But in my view the President has presented us with three choices: smoke and mirrors, tax hikes, or default. Republicans choose none of the above. I had hoped to do good, but I refuse to do harm. So Republicans will choose a path that actually reflects the will of the people, which is to do the responsible thing and ensure the government does not default on its obligations, and to continue to press the administration to rein in Washington, not to freeze it in place.

That is why I will continue to urge the President to rein in our deficits and debt in a way that puts the short- and long-term health of our economy ahead of his personal vision of government. That is what the American people want. That is what Republicans will continue to insist on. Nothing less will solve the crises we face. Nothing less will do.

Madam President, I yield the floor.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

MORNING BUSINESS

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, there will be a period of morning business for 1 hour, with the time equally divided and controlled between the two leaders or their designees, with Senators permitted to speak for up to 10 minutes each, with the majority controlling the first half and the Republicans controlling the final half.

Mr. MCCONNELL. I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. UDALL of New Mexico. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

HONORING SERGEANT FIRST CLASS LEROY ARTHUR PETRY

Mr. UDALL of New Mexico. Madam President, I rise today as our Nation honors the bravery and sacrifice of Santa Fe native Leroy Arthur Petry, an Army Ranger who, in 2008, risked his life to save his fellow soldiers on the battlefields of Afghanistan.

Today Sergeant First Class Petry will be honored for his "conspicuous gallantry" with our Nation's highest military decoration: the Medal of Honor.

I will be humbled to be at the White House along with Sergeant First Class

Petry's family, friends, and fellow soldiers as President Obama honors him with the Congressional Medal of Honor.

It will be a special day for Sergeant First Class Petry, for his wife and his children, and all his family, and for his fellow Americans, as he becomes only the second living active-duty servicemember to receive the Medal of Honor for actions in Iraq or Afghanistan.

Sergeant First Class Petry's story is one of courage and sacrifice and immense love of country. It is a story that began years ago in Santa Fe with a young man who struggled in high school but refused to give up and, instead, buckled down, dug deep, and found the hero within—a hero to the men he saved on that fateful day in Afghanistan, and a hero to all Americans who owe their freedoms to our brave men and women in uniform. It is the story of that day in May of 2008 that I wish to tell you today.

Sergeant First Class Petry was a member of the 75th Ranger Regiment when he and his fellow rangers were deployed to capture a high-value target in Afghanistan. During their raid, they were engaged in a firefight with the enemy when several in their regiment were pinned down by grenades.

Petry had already been wounded by bullet fire, shot through both legs by a hidden enemy. But Petry did not allow his wounds to stop him as the battle raged on. Pinned inside a courtyard with a fellow ranger, he continued the fight, calling in support and creating a brief pause in enemy fire by throwing a grenade their way.

One enemy grenade exploded within 10 yards of Petry and a group of rangers. The explosion knocked the rangers down and wounded two members of the team.

Soon after the first grenade exploded, the insurgents threw a second. This time the grenade landed near two of Petry's comrades. With no thought to his personal safety, Ranger Petry grabbed the grenade and attempted to toss it away. The grenade exploded as he tossed it, taking Petry's hand with it, but saving the lives of those near him.

Losing a hand would have been enough to break most people, but not Sergeant First Class Petry. Instead, he calmly inspected his wound, stemmed the flow of blood with a tourniquet, and continued the fight, helping to pin down the insurgents until they could be killed.

It was this immense act of bravery that saved the lives of his brothers in arms. In fact, one of his fellow rangers, SGT Daniel Higgins, wrote in a statement about that day:

If not for Staff Sergeant Petry's actions, we would have been seriously wounded or killed.

On that fateful day in 2008, then-Staff Sergeant Petry was no stranger to service to his country. He was on his eighth deployment—let me repeat that: his eighth deployment—in support of U.S. operations overseas, his sixth in Afghanistan, after two tours in Iraq.